

# Agent of the Month

**Andrew Bell**  
**Joyce, Jackman & Bell Insurors**

*Business Insurance Consultant*

**A**ndrew Bell, is a Pittston, Penn.-based insurance agent with 16 years of experience including specialization in insuring self-storage operations.

**How did you become interested in insuring self-storage operations?**

My interest in self-storage operations happened by accident. A commercial client inquired about insurance coverage for a self-storage facility that he owned with a couple of partners. As we began to dig deeper, I learned that there were dedicated national self-storage insurance programs serving this market, MiniCo being one of them. Once I understood the unique coverage options and pricing power of these programs, I quickly realized I could target other storage owners not only in my home state of Pennsylvania but across the country.

**Are self-storage operations your primary client base or do you also write other lines of business?**

Self-storage is a niche part of my overall book of business. I have a wider focus that includes franchise hotels, senior health care facilities, commercial real estate, and electrical/HVAC contractors.

**When meeting a new self-storage client, what key coverages do you recommend and why?**

I really try to educate my clients on the advantages of having building replacement cost at agreed value with no

co-insurance requirement. My experience tells me not many people buying insurance understand what this means and the penalties they may run into at the time of a property loss if the building is under-insured. If you're not in one of these programs already, chances are that you have some type of co-insurance requirement built into your policy. The other critical component of property

longer period of restoration and avoid the risk of running out of money before you are back in business.

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coverage is carrying enough business income coverage for at least 18 months. Partly due to the impact of COVID, there is a backlog of projects, which may result in longer delays in securing contractors, obtaining proper permits, and other issues. It's important to have enough coverage to adapt to a

**What are some of the risk trends you're seeing today for self-storage operations and how are you addressing them with your clients?**

The frequency and severity of weather-related losses continue on an upward trend with wind and hail being the most



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common culprit. For facilities located in high-exposure areas, we are seeing things like designated wind/hail deductibles, cosmetic loss limitation endorsements, or actual cash value endorsements being added to policies. To address these issues, our company has invested in a digital platform integrated with our agency-management system that allows us to consistently communicate and educate clients about new developments and provide information about protecting facilities against weather-related damage. Typically this means reaching out four to six times a year with updates. On a more personal level, I make it a point to call every one of my self-storage clients as their renewal date approaches and

speaking, the cost differential is nominal compared to the level of protection provided. I would say the same about pollutant cleanup and removal coverage. The bill to clean up toxic or hazardous waste could be financially crippling for a small independent owner. Adding this extra layer of protection represents just a fraction of the total premium cost.

#### **How do you help your self-storage clients address the risk of cybercrime?**

This is an issue we address with all of our clients. Cybercrime has no boundaries, and cyberattacks are occurring more frequently and becoming more sophisticated each year. For many small

knows the ins and outs of the various self-storage programs on the market and has the access to deliver those solutions to their clients. I have developed a consultative approach to help clients find the best self-storage program for their specific needs at the best available price year in and year out. It's that level of consistency that I feel our client's value most.

#### **What are some of the key reasons you select a particular insurance carrier to provide a quote on a self-storage operation?**

Establishing relationships and building trust with program underwriters goes a long way toward delivering

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discuss specific issues with them directly. Because a majority of my storage clients are scattered across the country, this gives me the opportunity to connect with them on a regular basis and better understand their concerns.

#### **What are your recommendations for specialty coverages such as customer goods legal liability, sale and disposal liability, and limited pollutant removal?**

My recommendation is to consider purchasing all three of these coverages. The incident rate on these types of claims is more common than many owners understand. Furthermore, the risk trends demonstrate that claim amounts are rising steadily, particularly in the areas of sale and disposal and customer goods legal liability. Tenants may be storing high-value items like custom RVs and high-end furnishings and household items. Most insurance programs automatically include \$10,000 of coverage for sale and disposal. But with a \$1,000 deductible, these limits do not offer adequate protection. I recommend a \$100,000 limit as a good starting point. Financially

operators, this is a case of "out of sight, out of mind." I think this protection should be an essential part of every business insurance plan. If your business is connected to the internet, it's become a question of when, not if, you will be attacked.

#### **Do you offer risk management services?**

Yes, our risk management services are spearheaded by Tom Conigliaro, who has a financial services background with over 25 years of experience in risk management and loss control. Tom identifies and evaluates risks specific to our clients' businesses and provides an ongoing and systematic approach to reducing risk exposures for our clients. He also identifies gaps in our clients' existing insurance programs and collaborates with our team to address them appropriately.

#### **What advice do you have for self-storage operators who want to manage their insurance costs without sacrificing coverage?**

My advice would be to find an agent with a dedicated focus in this area who

the best self-storage insurance solutions for clients. It is also important to understand a carrier's claim resolution process. When a loss occurs, our clients need to have the peace of mind that comes with knowing that their insurance company is going to make them whole again quickly and without delay. How well a carrier delivers on claim resolutions reflects on both them and the agent, and this can become a critical element of the client relationship.

#### **When it comes to purchasing insurance for a self-storage business, what is the most important thing you want your clients to understand?**

I think the most important thing to understand is why you are buying insurance in the first place. Most of my clients are independent private owner/operators. Protecting the asset from loss and preserving cash flow is a prerequisite for them. At the end of the day, my job is to find the best protection at the best available price. 